1:Gurdon E-4, 5 (no date) 1907 AR7 Khasi AR7

614 descended from a common ancestress. There are other instances
582 of clans being connected with one another, such connection being called by the Khasis *iateh kur*. Whenever such connection exists, intermarriage is strictly prohibited, and is considered to be *sang*. There is no custom of hypergamy. A Khasi cannot marry his maternal uncle's daughter during the lifetime
[604] of the maternal uncle. This is probably due to the fact that the maternal uncle, or *kni*, in a Khasi household is regarded more in the light of a father than of an uncle. His children, however, would belong to the clan of his wife and there would, therefore, in ordinary cases be no bar to the nephew marrying one of them. Marriage with the daughters of a father's sister is not allowed during the lifetime of the father, but after the latter's death there is no religious ban, although such unions are looked upon with disfavour by the Khasis. In the War country, how-
587 ever, such marriages are totally prohibited. A Khasi cannot
582 marry two sisters, but he can marry his deceased wife's sister after the expiry of one year from the wife's death, on payment of *jing sang* (price of *sang*, or taboo) to the wife's clan. A
582 Khasi cannot marry the daughter of his father's brother, she is his *para kha* (lit. birth sister). Similarly he cannot marry the daughter of his father's paternal uncle. He can, however, marry the daughter of his mother's brother, provided that the brother is dead. This somewhat paradoxical state of affairs is explained by the fact that the children of the mother's brother belong to a different clan to that of the mother, i.e. to the mother's brother's wife's clan. The Khasi, Synteng, War, and Lyngam divisions are not strictly endogamous groups, and there is nothing to prevent intermarriage between them. For instance, it has been the custom in the Nongkhlaw Siem family to obtain husbands for the princesses of the state from the War country. There is no custom amongst the Khasis of two men exchanging daughters, i.e. each marrying his son to
[423] the other's daughter. Notwithstanding the existence of the matriarchate, and the fact that all ancestral property is vested in the mother, it would be a mistake to suppose that the father
593 is a nobody in the Khasi house. It is true that the *kni*, or
604 mother's elder brother, is the head of the house, but the father is the executive head of the new home, where, after children

1: Gurdon E-4, 5 (no date) 1907 AR7 Khasi AR7

have been born to him, his wife and children live with him. It is he who faces the dangers of the jungles, and risks his life for wife and children. In his wife's clan he occupies a very high place, he is second to none but *u kni*, the maternal uncle, while in his own family circle a father and husband is nearer to his children and his wife than *u kni*. The Khasi saying is, "*u kpa uba lah ban iai, u kni uba tang ha ka iap ka im*," which may be translated freely as, "the father bears the heat and burden of the day, the maternal uncle only comes when it is a question of life or death." The Khasi father is revered not only when living, but also after death as *U Thawlang*, and special ceremonies are performed to propitiate his shade. Further remarks on the subject of marriage will be found in the Section which deals with religion.

DIVORCE.

Divorce amongst the Khasis is common, and may occur for a variety of reasons, such as adultery, barrenness, incompatibility of temperament, &c. The rule amongst the Khasis is that both parties must agree, but amongst the Wárs, especially the people of Shella, the party who divorces the other without his or her consent must pay compensation, which is called *ka mynrain*, or *ka thuem*. Amongst the Khasis it is not the custom to enforce restitution of conjugal rights; as a rule, when husband and wife cannot live together amicably, they agree to divorce one another; but occasionally it happens that either the husband or the wife will not agree to a divorce. Usually the husband would be willing to live with his wife; but when the latter consents neither to live with her husband nor to accept a divorce, a difficult situation arises, and it is in the event of such a contingency happening that the necessity of assessing *ka mynrain*, or *ka thuem* (compensation), occurs. The latter is computed by the village elders. Parties who have been divorced cannot afterwards remarry one another, but they are at liberty to marry into other families. A woman cannot be divorced during pregnancy. The following description of the divorce ceremony is taken from U Jeebon Roy's note on the

1: Gurdon E-4, 5 (no date) 1907 AR7 Khasi AR7

being in a position to help his descendant in times of trouble. The same thought underlies the extreme reverence with which *Ka Iawbei* is regarded. Thus we see a striking point of resemblance between the Khasi ancestor-worship and the ancient Shinto cult of Japan, as described by Mr. Lafcadio Hearn. *U Suid-Nia*, or *u Kni Kañbah*, the first maternal uncle, i.e. the elder brother of *Ka Iawbei*, is also much revered. It will also be noticed under the heading of memorial stones that the great central upright monolith of the *máwbynna*, or memorial stones, is erected in his honour. The influence of the *kni*, or mother's elder brother, in the Khasi family is very great, for it is he who is the manager on behalf of the mother, his position in the Khasi family being very similar to that of the *karta* in the Hindu joint family It is on this account that he is so much revered, and is honoured with a stone which is larger than the other up-right memorial stones after death. It will be seen in the article dealing with "the disposal of the dead," that at Cherra, on the occasion of the bestowal of the ashes in the cinerarium of the clan, a part of the attendant ceremonies consists of the preparation of two effigies called *Ka Puron* and *U Tyngshop*, intended to represent *Ka Iawbei* (the first mother) and *U Suid-Nia* (the first maternal uncle). The Wárs of Nongjri have a custom peculiar to themselves. They erect small thatched houses in their compounds, which they call *iing ksuid*. When they worship their ancestors they deposit offerings of food in these houses, the idea being that the ancestors will feed on the offerings. These Wárs do not erect memorial stones, nor do they collect the ashes of the clan in a common sepulchre; they deposit the ashes in circular cineraria, each family, or *iing*, possessing one. It should further be noted with reference to the Khasi custom of *ai bam*, or giving food to the spirits of deceased ancestors, that Dr. Frazer, in his "Golden Bough," has mentioned numerous instances of firstfruits being offered to the spirits of deceased ancestors by the tribes inhabiting the Malay Archipelago. (See pages 462-463 of the "Golden Bough.") Some other points of similarity in customs have already been noticed between the Khasis and certain Malay tribes.

1:Gurdon E-4, 5 (no date) 1907 AR7 Khasi AR7

787 [791] case. The Khasi word for consulting the omens is *khan*, and a diviner is called a *nongkhan*. Another method of obtaining omens is by dropping two leaves into a pool of water or on a stone, the position of the leaves as they fall, either right side uppermost or upside down, signifying good or evil as the case may be; this is called *khan-sla*.

PRIESTHOOD.

793 104 The Khasi priest is usually called *Lyngdoh*, or *langdoh*; he is always appointed from the lyngdoh clan. The etymology of the word *lyngdoh* is said by certain lyngdohs of the Khyrim State to be *lang*=together and *doh*=flesh. A *lyngdoh*, or *langdoh*, is one who collects sacrificial victims, i.e. flesh for the purpose of sacrificing. It must be confessed, however, that this definition is doubtful, owing to the absence in the word *lyngdoh* of the prefix *nong* which is the sign of the agent in Khasi. Besides *lyngdohs* there are persons called *soh-blei* or *soh-sla*, who may 793 also be said to be priests. The Khasis, unlike the Hindus, have [604] no *purohit* or priest to perform the family ceremonies. Such duties fall to the lot of the head of the family or clan, who 782 carries them out generally through the agency of the *kni*, or maternal uncle. Old Khasis are frequently well versed in the details of sacrifices, and in the art of obtaining auguries by examining the viscera of sacrificial victims. Apart from family and clan sacrifices, there are the sacrifices for the good of the State or community at large; it is these sacrifices that it is the duty of the *lyngdoh* to perform. He may be said to be the priest of the communal religion, although he has certain duties in connection with offences committed against the social law of marriage, and with regard to the casting out of evil spirits from houses which may be thought to be infested with them. The lyngdohs of the Khasis may be likened to the Roman *pontifices*. 793 In the different Khasi States there is, as a rule, more 631 than one *lyngdoh*; sometimes there is quite a number of such priests, as in Nongkrem where there is a *lyngdoh* for each *raj* 793 or division of the state. There are a few Khasi States where 643 the priest altogether takes the place of the Siem, and rules the community with the help of his elders in addition to perform-

1: Gurdon E-4, 5 (no date) 1907 AR7 Khasi AR7

ing of which the last drop of liquor remains adhering to the spout of the gourd is the name selected for the child. Then the puja performer invokes the god to grant good luck to the child. The father takes the pot containing the placenta, after having previously placed rice flour and fermented rice therein, and waves it three times over the child, and then walks out with it through the main entrance of the house and hangs up the pot to a tree outside the village. When he returns from this duty, before he re-enters the house, another throws water over the father's feet. The father, being thus cleansed, enters, and holds the rice flour to his mouth three times. Two people then, holding the dried fish by their two ends, break them in two. The powdered turmeric mixed with rice flour and water is applied to the right foot of the father, the mother and the child receiving the same treatment. The friends and relations are then anointed, the turmeric being applied, however, to their left feet. The bow, arrows, *da*, and *u star* are carefully placed inside the inner surface of the thatch on the roof, and the ceremony is over. Rice flour is then distributed to all who are present, and the male adults are given liquor to drink. After two or three months the ears of the child are bored and ear-rings are inserted. These ear-rings are called *ki shashkor iawbei* (i.e. the ear-rings of the great-grandmother). Mr. Jenkins mentions that the naming ceremony amongst the Syntengs is performed by the "eldest aunt," presumably on the mother's side. A basket of eggs is placed in the centre of the room, and before the ceremony begins one egg has to be broken. Then the aunt of the child takes two sticks, and, raising them to her shoulder, lets them fall to the ground. Before they fall she shouts, "What name do you give the child?" The name is mentioned, and if, on falling upon the ground, one stick crosses the other, it is a proof that the name has won the approval of the spirit. If the sticks do not fall in this position, another egg is broken and another name is chosen, and the sticks are dropped as before until they fall in the required position, when it is understood by the performers that the name is a good one. Mr. Jenkins was informed by a young man "who had renounced heathenism" that some of the more cunning women cross the sticks before lifting them, and that

782 preserve the customs of the family or sib; she
596 must see to it that the ancient domestic customs
793 of the household sacrifices are truly preserved; it is her duty, to keep the inherited ceremonies of the sacrifices pure and to hand them down conscientiously to the descendants. Therefore she has to arrange for the necessary sacrificial materials; she must prepare everything; she is the only one who must fast before the offering of many a sacrifice; she gives the order for the sacrifice, and she should also have to perform it herself.

But this does not happen. In reality no woman offers the sacrifice herself. (4) She is

4. With the exception of the secret sacrifices, about which, see later.

• [604] represented by a male person. But he must be related to her on the maternal side. Usually a maternal uncle (kni) represents her. Such representation by a relative is always necessary, whether it be for a public or a private sacrifice. But not merely the degree of relationship must lie in the feminine line; there is still something else that must be observed for each sacrifice. Even though the duties of the sacrificers and their methods of sacrificing are very different and are arranged according to the customs and inherited usages in the family or in the sib or in the state or community, yet in one point they are all similar: namely, all the sacrificers must be assisted by a woman during the performance of the services referred to. She is simply called ka lyngdoh (the priestess). [213] Because the man must function in her name and he is only her representative at the sacrifice,

Ik Chattopadhyay E-4, 5 (no date) 1941 AR7 Khasi AR7

[p.25]

CHAPTER III

It is evident from the discussions in the previous chapter, that the children born in a house have to take note, as they grow up, of the seniority and juniority among the sisters of the mothers, and also of the brothers of the mother. They have however very little relation with the brothers of the father, and we have to explain why the latter are classed with the father. This point will be discussed later. Here we may note that the relative lack of importance of the father's sisters has resulted in her not receiving distinction by age in the table of Kinship terms ; it is however indicated in address. Similarly the wife of the mother's brother is also not distinguished by age.

It may however be questioned why such a distinction by age is extended to the husband of the mother's sister. As noted before, a Khasi does not set up a separate house until one or two children are born. The children who are born in the house of mother's mother, are looked after like mothers, not only by the progenitress but her sisters. While there would arise no question as to who is the actual mother, it would be normal for the children to call the mother and her sisters by the same term which would thus cover the women of that generation who live in that house. Each little child would find its mother's sister addressed as "mother" by its playmate and cousin. Hence he or she would also tend to extend the term to the mother's sister from the mother. Under such circumstances, the simplest mode of distinction would be to apply the term "mother" to the actual relation, and add qualifying adjectives for the sisters of the mother. The Khasis use for this purpose, quite appropriately, terms denoting seniority and juniority for reasons previously stated. Reciprocally, a woman uses the same terms for

Ik Chattopadhyay E-4, 5 (no date) 1941 AR7 Khasi AR7

601 604 her children and sister's children, using an additional term for the latter, to make the distinction clear. The mother's brother's wife, and the father's sister live elsewhere, and cannot therefore share the same kinship term with the mother. The husbands of the mother's sisters are comparable to the father, as these males are all outsiders who have married the women 602 of the house. The actual father "U Kpa" is the husband of the actual mother "Ka Kmie" and is clearly distinguished. The others are the husbands of the "Kmie San" and "Kmie Nah." Hence they are given the labels of "Kpah San" and [593] "Kpa Nah" or "Kpa Khynnah." They derive their kinship terms denoting "father" through their wives who are called mothers by the children—not through any sexual rights on the wife's sisters. Such sexual rights, as noted before, have no existence. Hodson is not justified in ascribing this identity of kinship terms to alleged marriage rules and sexual rights which were operative in a hypothetical earlier type of Khasi society.

601 604 The mother's brother is important to the Khasi child, and has a special name, Ma, with an adjective such as Rangbah to indicate his position among his brothers. His relation with his sister's children is different from that of the mother's sister's husbands. It is more or less formal and ceremonial. A similar relative, on the father's side of the family, is the father's sister, though her position is not so important. Nevertheless, the two relatives are comparable. The mother's brother is in charge of the management of the mother's ancestral property and helps in performing important social ceremonies for the group. The father's sister is the repository of the bones of the father's family; in her is vested the preservation of the family religious traditions. Both these relatives live in houses separate from those of the nephews and nieces concerned and are, in a sense, of other households. Each of them was born in the natal house of one of the parents. They are therefore clearly distinguished from the father, the mother, the sisters of the mother and their husbands. But a common term, allowing

Ik Chattopadhyay 8-4, 5 (no date) 1961 ASI Khasi ASI

for difference in sex, is applied to both. The corresponding uncle and aunt by marriage are referred to by terms which make this clear. The husband of the father's sister is a "Ma" like the mother's brother and is also referred to as "Kni." But as his position by age is unimportant, the adjective of position is lacking in his case. Similarly the mother's brother's wife and the father's sister have a common term "Nia"; but the latter has her relationship through the father clearly indicated by the additional term "Kha" which refers to kinship through a male. The mother's brother's wife is, on the contrary, an aunt by marriage. The husband of the father's sister derives his term through his wife; and the wife of the mother's brother, through her husband. The identities M.B. = F.S.H. and M.B.W. = F.S. are therefore derived indirectly and are not original. Hodson's hypothesis that they represent actual identity of kinship in an earlier dual society therefore turns out to be superfluous.

Reciprocally, a man refers to his sister's children by a term which is different from that for his own children. A woman also refers to her brother's children by this term which is different from that used for her own or her sister's children. As indicated, the M.B. as well as the F.S. are both on a parallel footing, and are practically labelled together, allowing for differences of sex.

We may say that there are, in Khasi society, two clearly recognised units. One of these is the house and household, where the men and women have been born. Inside this house group, the sisters have similar rights, actual as well as potential. As we have seen, on the death of one sister, where there is no female issue, another sister takes her place in continuing the traditional religious entity of the group. The brothers again, among themselves, take one another's place in succession, in the matter of authority, and of management of the family property. The other unit is that of the woman, her husband and the children. We may refer to it as the unit set up by marriage.

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among Khasis. Even the Garos whom he cites apparently as representing a type of social organisation which the Khasis had earlier, do not encourage marriage with the father's sister's daughter. There is also no evidence that a Khasi ever married his mother's brother's widow. As I have shown earlier, the marriage prohibitions regarding cross-cousins can be explained on the basis of existing social and economic forces in Khasi society. The rule regarding exclusion of the F.B.Z.Z merely states that a woman cannot marry the son of her para Kha. It is not a new prohibition.

We may now state the reasons why a Khasi calls his father's brothers by the same term as father, and the wives of these uncles, as mother, using of course a qualifying term for seniority and juniority. As noted before, a Khasi boy or girl calls his mother's sister's children brothers and sisters. He avoids them strictly in marriage. They are not like cross-cousins, marriageable under certain circumstances. Any sexual approach towards them would have led in the old days to exile and also excommunication. The children of the father's brother are similarly excluded from the category of marriageable persons. They are like brothers and sisters, and as such are addressed as Bah, Hep and Kong. They are referred to as Para Kha. As Hodson observes, the term Para conveys, when used as a prefix, the idea of having common rights or status. It also means, when used by itself, a younger brother or sister. The term Kha refers to relation (by birth) through a male. It is used for example in the combination Bah Kha, which denotes both varieties of cross-cousins, the children of the mother's brother, as well as the father's sister. A Khasi man (and) woman has already another set of parallel cousins who are sexually tabooed. Their parents are given terms denoting the father and mother, with certain modifications. As the children of the father's brothers are also sexually tabooed, it would be natural to extend to them the terms used for the parents of the other group of non-marriageable cousins.

13:Mukherjee E-5 (1954)1958 AR7 Khasi AR7

extended form more often when the children of the deceased sisters of *Ka-Khadduh* reside there. This extension is on the mother's side and is affiliated through the extension of mother-child relationship.

Additional members like widower brothers or widowed sisters make the Khasi family a composite one.

In a Khasi family father, mother and her brother are very important. Father who is regarded as *Myndor* (stranger) or *Uakong kha* (begetter), has also the position of *Kynrad* (master) of the house (set-up by him). He is the executive head and the mother is the *dejure* owner of the household.

Modern conditions and spread of Christianity have greatly affected the Khasi society and changed the Khasi ways of life but have failed to alter the traditional mode of inheritance even among the Christian Khasis. Another important fact which is apparent in the Khasi families, is the change of the status of the mother's brother (*Ukni*) in his sister's house. His influence has greatly been diminished due to clash with *Ka-Khadduh* (heiress). He has almost lost his control over his sister's family. This has made the women exert their status to a danger point. Consequently, some amount of maladjustment in the relationship system, moral depravity and disintegration loom large in the family horizon.

Family is the core of Khasi social organization and the closeness of familial kin with the members of the sub-clan is due more to the fact that sub-clan owes its development to the family. A *Shi-K'jah* (member of sub-clan) is a secondary relative and can easily be approached for any help.

The functions of the above mentioned social groupings are as follows:

Clan (*Ka-Kur*)—It regulates marriage. It being a larger non-residential kin group contact between its members is infrequent. The amount of social participation needed on certain level to intensify the relationship among its members falls far short of. But nevertheless, there existed among the members

[Should read: regarded.—Analyst]

15: Nakane E-5 (1955-1956) 1967 AR7 Khasi AR7

society? Among the matrilineal Central Bantus, Richards says that the determining factor in residence at marriage is the marriage payment or the type of goods and services which the bridegroom gives (Richards, 1950, p. 249). However, the Khasi have no such custom in the marriage contract, it is therefore out of the question to explain the two types of residence in this way. In the case of the Khasi, the determining factor is the type of marriage with relation to the rule of inheritance and ownership of property, which is clearly related to the structure of the *iing*. Khasi marriages can be divided into two categories i.e., marriage with an heiress and with a non-heiress. Marriages with an heiress must be uxorilocal. This accounts for category 1 or 3 of the household pattern. On the other hand, marriages with a non-heiress become neolocal and correspond to category 4 of the household unit.

IV. Marriage with the Heiress

A man married to an heiress, usually lives with his wife's parents and her unmarried or divorced brothers and sisters. For a man, life after marriage under such circumstances require great adjustment and endurance. The husband's status is especially weak when a male member of the wife's kin lives in the same household. The management of property and all economic activities are entirely controlled by the authority (wife's brother or maternal uncle) of the *iing*. The husband works in the wife's field under constant supervision from this authority. Both economic activities and domestic affairs are always under the management of this authority. The children have more attachment to, and are more obedient to, the maternal uncle than to the father. The tie between the uncle and the nephew is so strong that the father is rather like an additional member of the household. He is the last person to be introduced to visitors.

This family system is clearly reflected in the daily behaviour. When we visited the Khasi household of a youngest daughter, if a man (obviously the husband) came first to greet us, he always said "please wait, my wife (or mother-in-law) is coming." And it was the wife who entertained us, offering tea or pan and discussing matters with us, while her husband remained silent in the corner of the room, or in the next room. If her uncle or brother was there, *he* would be the person who talked to us, while his niece or sister served us. In such a case, we were seldom introduced to the husband. When I was working at Shella, I happened to stay in such a family. I had hardly any opportunity to talk to the husband during the two weeks of my stay. He left the house very early in the morning and came back late in the evening from the fields. While he was at home, he was

15: Nakane E-5 (1955-1956) 1967 AR7 Khasi AR7

592 593 604 always somewhat outside the family conversation which was centred on the maternal uncle and his sisters, nephews and nieces, by whom I was well taken care of. This is somewhat similar to the situation amongst the Cewa and the Yao of the Central Bantus, which have what Richard calls 'the detachable husband' (Richards, 1950, pp. 233-35, 248), though the parallel is not by any means exact.

428 581 586 [604] [606] [592] [593] There is, therefore, inevitably an element of tension in the relations between the wife's maternal uncle (including parents-in-law) and the husband (son-in-law) and this tension makes the latter's life extremely uncomfortable. This awkward position is well shown in the divorce rate. At Kongton (see List 9), out of 61 couples (house-owners and their spouses), the number of persons who had experience of divorce was 33 (female 15, male 18) and those married more than twice numbered 19 (female 7, male 12). Out of 61 couples, there were only 31 in which neither husband nor wife had been divorced. In my census of Jatinga village, 70 per cent of all divorce cases were marriages to heiresses. In general, the period when divorce occurs more frequently is before a couple get children and after the wife has passed the child-bearing age. A marriage breaks up either through the action of the wife or of the husband, but generally through that of the wife. However, the state of separation which I presently describe is brought about by the husband, though later it results in a divorce from the wife. Divorce does not mean a great catastrophe for a Khasi wife, especially if she is an heiress and her husband's economic contribution is not significant. Moreover, in this society remarriage is as easy for a widow or divorcée, as it is to divorce. In the villages of Sohkynduh and Kongton, the couple who wants to divorce has only to throw a few Annas together in the presence of some witness, usually an elderly man.

[587]

581 593 In addition to divorce, there are many actual separations of husband and wife, of short or long duration, when the husband runs away from his wife's house to his sister's. Though it does not always end in divorce, considerable number of husbands have a strong tendency to spend most of their time at their sister's house. Khasi women often told me, "I don't know why he does not come back to my place." I have often found the husband staying at his sister's house only a few houses away from his wife's, without any particular reason. They are obliged to see each other every day whether divorced or separated. This kind of ambiguity in the marriage relation seems to have an important correlation with the Khasi social structure, combined with the village endogamy. The man and and wife have grown up together from their childhood in the same village and known each other very well. Hence their psychology cannot clearly distinguish the marriage form as a newly-established independent social relation-

15: Nakane E-5 (1955-1956) 1967 AR7 Khasi AR7

ship. They still live in the same familiar atmosphere as before their marriage. The implications of this ambiguity in the married state are considerable. Particularly the husband's uncomfortable situation, when the wife is heiress, encourages him to take marriage less seriously.

A husband who undergoes hardship in his wife's house, finds himself as the authority in his sister's house; if he is not the authority, he can find at least a respected position as uncle or brother. In the case of a man of authority in the *iing*, the tendency for him to regard his *iing* as more important than his married life is proportionately stronger, as I will discuss later. Hence the most unstable and unsuccessful marriages are those between the heiress and the man of authority. This is one of the reasons we often find among the Khasi: a brother or an uncle, who is already married, acting nevertheless as the head to a family *(iing)* and as a member of its domestic group. This means that he is in a state of temporary separation or divorced. Among the Ashanti, a man and his wife's brother are never found as members of a common household (Fortes, 1950, p. 262), but among the Khasi, on the contrary, a man and his wife's brother are often found as members of a common household. In such cases, however, the brother has no wife, or never brings his wife to his *iing*. Therefore, a man and his wife and his sister never reside together. As far as the residence of women is concerned, the Khasi keep to the strict descent rule; two women who belong to different descent groups never live together. This point differentiates the Khasi residence pattern, in which social structure is involved, from that not only of the Ashanti but also of the Yao where the head of a descent group can bring his wife to his sister's household, though, among other members, uxorilocal marriage is the rule. These differential aspects of matrilineal systems will be discussed from a more theoretical point of view later.

In addition, should a Khasi man even succeed in spending his life with his wife's kinsmen, as soon as the wife dies, he will usually return to his *iing*, that is, to his sister's house, where he is received warmly and where he often acts as the *de facto* authorithy, as in the similar situation of divorce and separation. Thus the strong matrilineal structural principle tends to orient a man towards his own descent group, the *iing*.

The man's attachment to his *iing* is very great throughout his life. In this regard the Khasi differs from the matrilineal Negri Sembilan Malay. Among the latter, returning to the matrilineal kin is regarded by the man as an imposition rather than as the enjoyment of a legitimate privilege (see Swift, 1958, p. 157).[1] This difference

1. He presents this fact as one of the reasons of the durability of marriage among the Negri Sembilan. Indeed, on this precise point they differ from the Khasi where marriage is rather unstable.

17: Banerjee E-5 (1955) 1962 AR7 Khasi AR7
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would not be in a position to divert their attention to the problems of basic amenities and other necessaries in their life. This is expressed through rituals which are maintained through tradition and transmitted from generation to generation. A proper performance of the ritual ensures prosperity.

The maternal uncle occupies a very important position in the social life of the Khasi community. He acts as a manager of the family and his opinion is always sought for in any matter of social implications. He is thus honoured and respected by all the members of the house. In spite of the matrilineal set up of their society, the men are given honourable position in the affairs of the family. Their role has been given due recognition in their various customs and rites. The uncle (mother's brother) as also husbands in some exceptional cases, are always remembered by the living members of the house for their wisdom and sagacity. They are thus deified and are prayed by them to bestow all possible help to tide over their period of crisis. The Khasi pantheons to whom the people in general pay due reverence, are considered to have led similar life as prevelent in their present society. Thus the various rites and ceremonies that are observed, expressing clearly the duties, nature and obligations for these deities, are simply a reflection of the Khasi way of life. The general pattern of social structure has been found to be projected unconsciously through their religious worship and these celebrations are of course of great value to the local inhabitants as it re-inforces certain cultural features so characteristic of this tribe.

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